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**Wesley Burks, M.D., Receives UAMS College of  
Medicine's 2024 Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award**

LITTLE ROCK — Wesley Burks, M.D., dean of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) School of Medicine and CEO of UNC Health, received the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Medicine's 2024 Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award.

"Wesley's current roles alone would warrant the Distinguished Alumnus Award, but he has truly earned this honor over his entire career as a physician-scientist and leader in academic medicine," said Steven Webber, M.D., dean of the College of Medicine and UAMS executive vice chancellor. "It is also a well-earned award because of his impact on UAMS and Arkansas Children's."

Burks, a 1980 UAMS College of Medicine graduate, served in several leadership roles in the UAMS Department of Pediatrics from 1985 to 2003, and is internationally recognized for his research in food allergies. After UAMS, Burks worked at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and UNC-Chapel Hill.

"I want to thank UAMS for allowing me to come back to Arkansas to see old friends and make some new friends," said Burks. "The opportunities created by going to school here were things that I did not expect, and what I'm doing now is not even close to what I thought I would be doing, so UAMS opened doors beyond what I really could have imagined. For that I am eternally grateful, thank you."

Burks received the award at the College of Medicine Luncheon and Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award Ceremony held during UAMS' Alumni Weekend.

"The Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award was established in 1973 to recognize graduates who have demonstrated exceptional achievement and contributions to medicine," said Webber. "Previous honorees have accomplished this through world-class patient care, groundbreaking research and exemplary health care administration or other

Wesley Burks, M.D., Receives UAMS College of Medicine's 2024 Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award

Page 2

forms of leadership. Some have made their mark in and around Arkansas and others around the nation and the world.”

Before attending UAMS, Burks graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. He completed a pediatric residency at the Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock and a fellowship in allergy and immunology at Duke University Medical Center.

Burks joined UAMS in 1985 as an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics, rising to professor in 1996. In addition to his teaching role, he served as vice chair of research for the Department of Pediatrics and president of the Arkansas Children's Research Institute. During his time with UAMS, he led the efforts for a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant that expanded the construction of laboratory space at the Arkansas Children's Research Institute. His allergy and immunology division became nationally and internationally recognized for basic and clinical research into food allergies.

Burks joined Duke University in 2003 and served as a professor and chief in its Division of Pediatric Allergy & Immunology from 2003 to 2011. He also served as the program director for Duke University Medical Center's Allergy & Immunology Fellowship Program. In 2010 he was invested in the Kiser-Arena Distinguished Professor.

Burks joined UNC-Chapel Hill in 2011 as physician-in-chief of the North Carolina Children's Hospital and was named chair of the Department of Pediatrics in 2012, as well as the Curnen Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics. In 2015, he was named executive dean of the UNC School of Medicine, during which he oversaw the school's focus on rural health initiatives and primary care education, which is now ranked first in the country. He assumed his current position in 2019.

Richard F. Jacobs, M.D., UAMS professor emeritus and UAMS College of Medicine Class of 1977, nominated Burks for the award and had the honor of expressing why his longtime friend was worthy of such acknowledgement.





“Dr. Burks' accomplishments are beyond impressive and certainly warrant the Dean's Distinguished Alumni Award,” said Jacobs. “The most impressive part of all this success story is the person — Wesley is a very humble, soft-spoken and collegial person. Integrity, honesty, compassion and dedication are all hallmarks of who he continues to be as a person.”

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and eight institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute, Institute for Digital Health

Wesley Burks, M.D., Receives UAMS College of Medicine's 2024 Dean's Distinguished Alumnus Award

Page 3

& Innovation and the Institute for Community Health Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,275 students, 890 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 12,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit [www.uams.edu](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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